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MAR 26

FORCE MANAGEMENT  
POLICY

The Honorable Bob Stump  
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman

This responds to the request in the Senate Armed Services Committee Report, No. 106-292, page 319, to analyze the requirements for animal assistance for dependents of military personnel whose medical conditions may require such assistance.

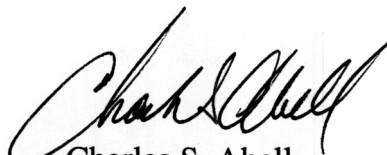
We estimate that between 75 and 100 family members are visually impaired to the extent that they might benefit from having an animal assistant. To determine the economic impact of acquiring an animal assistant, we contacted a number of animal assistance organizations. All reported that charitable donations are used to cover the cost of providing animal assistants. Animals and training are provided at no charge to the individual, or in some cases, at a nominal charge of \$150 to \$200.

Currently, benefits under the military health care system do not include assistive animals. By law and regulation, the Program for Persons with Disabilities may provide an eligible beneficiary who is moderately or severely mentally retarded or who has a serious physical handicap with financial assistance for certain specified categories of services and supplies that contribute to confirming, arresting, or reducing the disabling effects of the qualifying condition. By law, the specified categories of benefits are: diagnostic services; inpatient, outpatient, and home treatment; training, rehabilitation, and special education; and institutional care in private nonprofit, public and State institutions, including appropriate transportation to and from such facilities. By regulation, appropriate adjunct services can be covered when the services directly relate to the furnishing or delivery of a category of benefit authorized by law. Thus, intermittent or infrequent assistive services (e.g., interpreters or translators) which reasonably enable a disabled beneficiary to understand or receive the benefits otherwise authorized are an adjunct service covered under the program. This does not include assistive animals.



I trust the above responds to your inquiry. I am sending a similar letter to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Armed Services.

Sincerely,



Charles S. Abell

cc:

The Honorable Ike Skelton  
Ranking Member